

Differentiating Between “Consultation” And “Consensus”

Consultation	Consensus
Statement of Purpose “To build consensus as a basis for a decision”	Statement of Purpose “To build consensus as a basis for a decision”
“To inform and become informed”	“To inform and become informed”
“To achieve stakeholder input and buy-in”	“To achieve stakeholder input and buy-in”
“To meaningfully involve interested parties”	“To meaningfully involve interested parties”

The Similarity Ends Here!

Consultation	Consensus
Participants: Advocates	Participants: Decision makers
Objectives: Hear the voices of many interests	Objectives: Search for a single voice that speaks for all interests
Activity: Make representations	Activity: Find trade-offs
Approach: Positional	Approach: Interest-based
Process Predetermined by decision maker	Process Participant-designed
Interaction: Contact among parties from none to a lot	Interaction: Relationship builds among the parties through the process
Negotiation: Implicit—if at all, in the ‘back room’ and consensus is not required	Negotiation: Explicit—“above board” and includes consultation
Outcomes: Many inputs to ultimate decision maker	Outcomes: “One output”—either the actual decision or consensus recommendation to ultimate decision maker
Time Lines: Prescribed	Time Lines: Participant-driven, sometimes within parameters